DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 912 CS 506 502

TITLE Joining Hands: The Final Report of the Model Programs for Dropout Prevention.
INSTITUTION North Carolina State Dept. of Public Instruction, Raleigh. Div. of Support Programs.
PUB DATE Dec 88
NOTE 30p.; For related documents, see ED 293 051, ED 268 433, and ED 265 430.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Demonstration Programs; *Dropout Prevention; *Dropout Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; High Risk Students; School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *North Carolina

ABSTRACT

This report describes three model programs in dropout prevention that were developed for three school systems, Granville, Haywood, and Wake Counties, in the State of North Carolina. The three model programs have several general characteristics in common: planning; comprehensiveness; collaboration; commitment of a wide range of people; and dropout prevention as an integral part of the overall school program. The common program elements include an interagency advisory council for dropout prevention; an educators' committee for dropout prevention; a dropout prevention coordinator on the central office staff; joint training; a written plan of action; media emphasis; and a data collection system. The report describes, in the school system's own words, each dropout prevention program. The report concludes that during the three years of implementation, the model programs for dropout prevention in Granville, Haywood, and Wake Counties have developed sound strategies to meet the needs of all youth identified as at risk. In each of the sites the entire community has been involved in the implementation process. (MS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED301912

JOINING HANDS:

The Final Report of the Model Programs for Dropout Prevention

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Brumback

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
DECEMBER, 1986

JOINING HANDS: THE FINAL REPORT OF THE MODEL PROGRAMS FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Dropout Prevention Section
Division of Support Programs
Support Services Area
Department of Public Instruction
116 West Edenton Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-1712

FOREWORD

Several years ago the State of North Carolina began its statewide dropout prevention program. Part of the effort was focused on developing programs in three school systems which could serve as models to others in the state. Granville, Haywood, and Wake Counties, through a coordinated approach, have shown that a comprehensive program, kindergarten through grade twelve, is critical to reaching at-risk youth and providing services necessary to keep them in school.

Over the three years of program development, the three models have seen success in gaining the necessary commitment from educators and the community to support keeping students in school. Awareness of the impact of dropping out on society has increased to the point that extensive programs and services now exist to meet the needs of a wide range of youngsters. Efforts in these communities have been on-going and will continue as more innovative ideas are implemented to expand even further the options available to students at risk.

The report which follows describes each of the model programs and provides ideas which can be adapted to any school system. It is hoped that readers will be inspired to join hands with a variety of people from the school and community to make a successful school experience and ultimate graduation realities for, rather than merely the dreams of, our young people.

Theodore R. Drain
Assistant State Superintendent
Support Services Area

Dennis O. Davis, Director
Division of Support Programs

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, concern has been growing about the alarming number of students leaving school prior to graduation. Out of every high school class in North Carolina, 25 to 27% of the students, approximately 89,000, drop out of school. North Carolina presently ranks 34th among the states in graduating its students from high school. The impact of that decision to drop out on society and on those individuals is enormous.

In 1984, the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction received a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to develop a system of coordinated and comprehensive services designed to keep students in school to complete successfully their high school education. Following the review of proposals from one third of the school systems in North Carolina, Granville, Haywood, and Wake Counties were the three selected as sites for the model programs. In July of 1986, the General Assembly of North Carolina continued the level of funding for these programs as provided from the Foundation grant for the 1985-86 school year. This section contains information from each of the programs resulting from their first three years of operation.

Important to note is the fact that just as the three models were about to implement their programs, the General Assembly created the state dropout prevention fund as a part of the Basic Education Program. The fund totaled $15 million for the first year, $20 million for 1986-87, and $23.5 million for 1987-88. This step offered great opportunities for services to at-risk students all across the state. For the first time, funds specifically targeted to keep students in school were available to every school system in North Carolina, including the three models. What the models were able to do with their special grant resources was to demonstrate the importance of commitment, planning, and collaboration to allow direct service monies to be used as effectively as possible. The intent has always been to learn from the model programs and to adopt their successes statewide.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODEL PROGRAMS

The three model programs have several general characteristics in common. These features give the programs a character distinctly different from many isolated, independent programs and help assure their long-range effectiveness. These characteristics, shared ideas, and ideals include the following:

a. Planning

Each community used a logical process of planning to assist a diverse group of individuals from school and community to work through the identification of problems, the selection of goals, and the agreement on appropriate objectives and strategies.

b. Comprehensiveness

The three-year plans provided a framework for a wide variety of strategies to address the needs of youngsters in all grades, K-12. They considered both school and community roles and identified approaches needed for many kinds of problems.

c. Collaboration

Bringing diverse groups together in unique and creative ways has borne fruit in all three communities. When people join hands to work for the benefit of at-risk students in a coordinated way, the rewards are great.

d. Commitment of a wide range of people

Combining talents has proven its effectiveness. There have been shared vision and personal dedication from people from many walks of life. In all three models, the community-wide focus has been a positive and productive force.

e. Dropout prevention as an integral part of the overall school program

Within the school system itself -- including superintendent, all teachers, student services staff, cafeteria workers, janitors, and many others -- a united effort where all feel that they are a part of dropout prevention was developed. All school staff worked together to make school a place where youngsters like to be.

COMMON PROGRAM ELEMENTS

In addition to having broad characteristics in common, the models share essential program elements which distinguish their effort and contribute to their success. Beyond these elements, the programs have their own unique nature and approaches, as they should. What grows out of these elements are distinct programs meeting local needs and reflecting local interest and ingenuity. It is, however, from the strong foundation of the program elements, which are similar regardless of place or time, that the diverse programs arise. The following elements, which themselves vary in specific form in the three communities, are basic:

a. Interagency advisory council for dropout prevention

This interagency group brings together all those concerned with the problem of dropping out so that it can be attacked effectively. Members include educators, human services and justice system professionals, business and industry representatives, civic leaders, parents, and other concerned citizens.

b. Educators' committee for dropout prevention

Within the school system itself are many who are contributing to dropout prevention every day; yet they are often not aware of one anothers' roles. The Educators' Committee provides a vehicle for gaining professional and technical perspectives on dropping out and for mobilizing the school system to keep students in school. Administrators, classroom teachers, and student services, exceptional children, child nutrition, and compensatory education staff as well as others are involved.

c. Dropout prevention coordinator on the central office staff

The funding resources of the Z. Smith Reynolds grant were used primarily to support the position of dropout prevention coordinator on the central office staff of each of the model programs. The coordinator provides the cohesion which a program with many components demands and focuses attention on dropout prevention. While many administrators have great concern for dropping out, finding the time to develop and carry out an effective program to keep students in school can be difficult in the midst of other demands. For the dropout prevention coordinator, the central concern is bringing together all those who must work on dropout prevention and assuring that their ideas and plans are implemented. Organization, facilitation, and communication skills are essential for the coordinator.

d. Joint training

For any group of people to work well together, there must be a common understanding of a problem and general agreeement on direction. For about eighty interagency council members and others who worked with the three model programs, this shared learning came at the Dropout Prevention Institute, held in Southern Pines in July, 1985. The participants came to learn, share information, and begin their plans. The curriculum included study of learning styles, factors influencing dropping out of school, various models for dropout prevention, explanation of the role of human services agencies, and planning, among other topics.

e. Written plan of action

Using a basic planning format, each community developed its own written plan of action. It is in the plans that the uniqueness of each program begins to be seen. From surveying the problem, setting goals, and identifying strategies, to determining outcome measures, the planning process provided a step-by-step method to increase the likelihood that the program would achieve its purpose. The approaches taken included school-based and community strategies, and they were scheduled for implementation at appropriate times. A plan has to remain flexible, and all three communities continued to make adjustments and add new strategies as the need arose.

f. Media emphasis

While every plan was different, every one was alike in one specific objective. All targeted community awareness and public information, reflecting the recognition that understanding of the problem and willingness to combat it by a wide range of people are critical. While the awareness campaigns were implemented differently in each community, the outcomes were the same -- increased support of keeping students in school.

g. Data collection system

Early in the development of North Carolina's dropout prevention program it became evident that the lack of full and dependable information about dropouts and at-risk students would hinder the development of dropout prevention efforts unless the problem was remedied. The model programs took a leading role in testing a system that could meet some of the state's data needs for students who drop out. Results of data collection during the three-year period are included in each community's report.

Conclusion

During the three years of implementation, the model programs for dropout prevention in Granville, Haywood, and Wake Counties have developed sound programs to meet the needs of all youth identified as at risk. In each of the sites, the entire community has been involved in the implementation process; and each has much to share with others who are committed to helping all of our young people complete their education. In the following pages, the model programs describe briefly in their own words their dropout prevention programs.

GRANVILLE COUNTY

BACKGROUND

Granville County can be described as a county in transition. For many years the county was primarily an agricultural one with the vast majority of employment opportunities centered around tobacco. In recent years, the growth of business and industry has resulted in numerous changes for the people of the county with employment opportunities changing to blue- and white-collar types of jobs. With this growth of business and industry, there has come a corresponding demand upon the school system to improve the dropout situation.

Other factors which both describe the county and highlight the need for dropout prevention include the following: (1) 18.7% of youth aged 16-19 are not high school graduates and are not enrolled in school. (2) The percent of adults aged 25 and older who are high school graduates is only 44.39. (3) The percent of all children under 18 who are below the poverty level is 19.93.

With a dropout rate of 7.0% in 1983-84 and indications that this rate would rise over the next several years, Granville County personnel felt the urgency to develop a broad-based program to meet more effectively the needs of at-risk youth. With special funding and strong support from the school and community, a program targeting kindergarten through grade twelve was begun during the 1985-86 school year. The entire school system and community are committed to the importance of a dropout prevention program. This commitment begins with the endorsement of the board of education and continues with the support of the superintendent, the school system, and the community in the implementation of the plan.

GOALS

- Provide publicity and awareness in school, home, and community regarding dropout prevention.
- Develop a system of early identification of potential dropouts.
- Improve classroom environment/atmosphere with special attention to management skills and the development of positive attitudes toward self, work, community, and school.
- Set up a system for collection, organization, and maintenance of accurate dropout data.
- Improve communication among various school and community groups/agencies and coordinate activities for dropout prevention.
- Provide staff development opportunities for all school personnel.
- Develop alternative education programs to meet the needs of all students.
- Develop activities for potential dropouts which will be community based but coordinated with the school system.

MAJOR PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Dropout prevention as a critical objective - The superintendent, with the endorsement of the board of education, developed six critical objectives for the focus of the school system. One of these was dropout prevention. All central office staff, principals, and teachers developed their own objectives as well with dropout prevention being a high priority among all school personnel. This type of approach created a stable framework for the development of a broad-based dropout prevention program.

Central office coordinator - A full-time coordinator was hired to direct the total dropout prevention effort in the school system. All existing programs related to dropout prevention were added to the responsibilities of the coordinator to aid in a more unified, coordinated approach.

Dropout prevention plan - A comprehensive plan for dropout prevention was developed over a three-month period. The plan provides direction for all those in the school and community who work with dropout prevention. The timeline included in the plan helps keep the program on target.

Dropout prevention task force - A 34-member task force, representative of school and community, serves as a vehicle for accomplishing the goals and objectives stated in the plan. The group meets regularly in both large- and small-group sessions to monitor progress and to implement the strategies stated in the plan.

Dropout prevention educators' committee - A 20-member committee composed of educators was formed to address instructional issues related to dropout prevention. This is a working committee actually involved in implementation of parts of the dropout prevention plan.

Guidance services - The dropout prevention coordinator is responsible for supervising the county-wide guidance program. Counselors play an integral part in all dropout prevention activities and serve as the main contact person in each school.

In-school suspension - In-school suspension is an integral part of the dropout prevention program in all middle and high schools. State dropout and local dollars are used to fund this program. The dropout prevention coordinator supervises this program and includes local school coordinators as part of the county-wide guidance team.

Community involvement - Involving the community in dropout prevention efforts is a major component of the total approach in Granville County.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Family Awareness Month is held each year during the month of March. The entire month features a wide variety of activities in each school highlighting the family as a vital part of education.

- The MOP (Meaningful Other Person) program was begun at D. N. Hix School, a ninth-grade center with a high dropout rate. This program identifies students with problems and assigns a faculty member to serve as a positive role-model for the student. The program has been very successful and was instrumental in reducing the dropout rate at this school from 9.0% in 1984-85 to 4.5% in 1985-86.

- The Student-Assistance Program, a result of a joint grant between the Area Substance Abuse Services and the school system, was implemented in two of the schools during the spring of 1986 and expanded to two more during 1987. This program is designed to identify students with substance abuse problems, either their own or in their families, and provide intensive counseling to them.

- The Job Placement Center and Extended Day Programs were implemented during 1985-86 and target the special needs of high-risk students.

- Parties: Guidelines for Parents was published by two counselors in an effort to advise parents regarding acceptable standards of social behavior for their children.

- A suicide prevention manual was developed by four counselors as a guide for counselors and teachers to use in understanding and preventing suicide in youth.

- Teen Help Cards were printed as bookmarks for students and distributed to schools and other public agencies. The cards include phone numbers that students might need for information and help in crisis situations.

- Project INSERVICE, a $4,000 mini-grant awarded to the county to train teachers in four schools, was designed to increase students' positive self-images. Training included techniques to improve classroom management and communication skills.

- PALS (Provides Adult Loving Support) was implemented at West Oxford Elementary and designed to provide a support system for children identified as high-risk. Adults are assigned to six or eight children with whom they will have contact on a personal basis during the school year.

- ALERT, the dropout prevention newsletter, is distributed several times during the year for the purpose of informing the school and community of activities related to dropout prevention.

- A nine-month staff development effort has been offered to counselors and teachers entitled "Attitudes: Setting the Stage for Teaching and Learning."

- POPS (Power of Positive Students) was implemented at two schools during the 1987-88 school year. This program is designed to promote a positive atmosphere in the school which, in turn, should enhance learning.

- Teachers in the Extended Day Program were offered in-service training in Project CERES (Career Exploration Responsive to Every Student). This program infuses career education concepts into the existing curriculum. Students practice basic skills as they learn about themselves, the community, and economics.

- Granville County Schools and a volunteer group known as POP (Parent Opportunity Program) have joined hands for the 1987-88 school year. The purpose of the group is to work with pregnant girls both before and after the birth of their babies.

DATA REVIEW

ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE

YEAR	PERCENTAGE*	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	ACTUAL SCHOOL SYSTEM COUNT**
1983-84	7.0	149	---
1984-85	6.9	148	---
1985-86	5.9	130	117
1986-87	5.5	120	104
1987-88	Not yet available	Not yet available	122

* Provided by Information Center, North Carolina Department of Public Education.

** During the three years of model program development, the school system made an actual count of dropouts.

Note: The 122 dropouts for 1987-88 include 25 students expelled from Oxford Orphange two weeks before the close of school.

ANALYSIS OF DROPOUTS BY RACE AND SEX
SCHOOL YEARS 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88

Grade	White		Black		American Indian		Hispanic		Asian		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Below 7			3	1				1			5
7	2		4	1							7
8	2	1	5	4							12
9	35	11	45	6						1	98
10	21	17	40	19							97
11	24	17	23	23				1			88
12	5	8	7	13							33
SP*			2	1							3
Total	89	54	129	68				2		1	343

*Exceptional children in self-contained classes.

REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL
SCHOOL YEARS 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88

Reason* Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Below 7		2											2		1	5
7	2	1								2					2	7
8	1	2				1					1	4			3	12
9	2	3	2	11		8	13	2	5	14		11	9	16	2	98
10	4	7	3	3		13	14	1	6	6	5	3	9	18	5	97
11	2	12		8	1	6	8	3	2	8	3	9	4	19	3	88
12	1	2		6			7	4		1		1	5	4	2	33
SP**												2			1	3
Total	12	29	5	28	1	28	42	10	13	31	9	30	29	57	19	343

* 1 Health Problems
2 Pregnancy
3 Marriage
4 Choice of Work Over School
5 Substance Abuse
6 Employment Necessary
7 Unstable Home Environment
8 Child Care
9 Academic Problems
10 Discipline Problems
11 Attendance Problems
12 School Not Meeting Needs
13 Expulsion
14 Reason Unknown
15 Other

**Exceptional children in self-contained classes

OTHER DATA ABOUT DROPOUTS, 1985-86

Total number of absences	8,115
Average number of absences	23.5
Total number of retentions	433
Average number of retentions	1.7
Cumulative number of times in ISS	307
Cumulative number of times suspended out of school	161
Average competency test scores	
Reading	98
Math	92
Number identified as exceptional children	
Educable mentally handicapped	15
Trainable mentally handicapped	3
Specific learning disabled	11
Behaviorally/emotionally handicapped	3

HAYWOOD COUNTY

BACKGROUND

Haywood County's dropout prevention plan has consisted of creating an expanding program of prevention over a period of the last six years. Beginning with a background analysis of eighth grade dropouts in 1982-83, the program has progressed through a comprehensive program for personal interviews of all dropouts on an annual basis, a federally funded Dropout Early Warning and Support System project, an alternative education program, and designation as one of three North Carolina model dropout prevention programs funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, which is locally referred to as Operation H.I.T. (Hang In There).

Haywood County's dropout prevention program touches many aspects of a student's life. It is concerned with the educational, personal, and financial needs of all students. A number of programs and personnel in Haywood County address these needs through a coordinated effort.

Haywood County's dropout prevention program has a large number of persons who work directly or indirectly in dropout prevention. These include the following:

- Dropout Advisory Council
- Educators' Task Force
- Alternate teachers
- JTPA teachers
- Pupil personnel coordinator
- Health coordinator
- Remediation teacher
- In-school suspension personnel
- Home visitor
- Attendance counselors
- All counselors, grades 7-12
- School-based task groups
- Classroom teachers
- Central office staff
- Migrant teachers

A community-wide focus on dropout prevention has been addressed by using community persons as advisory council members, volunteers for transportation, volunteers as mentors, etc. Public awareness has been achieved through media, speaking engagements, and a speakers' bureau, with financial support from local citizens, industry, and civic clubs.

The purpose of this program is to address effectively the serious dropout problem which currently exists in this local education agency and in the state of North Carolina. Locally, the annual rate has been 7-8%, resulting in some 30% of those students who enter the ninth grade failing to graduate. The state rate is approximately 26% over a four-year period or some 23,000 students annually. The program is designed to meet the needs of and reduce risk potential for students who may be described as high-risk or dropout-prone in all grades, K-12, through a system of increased public awareness, early identification, human and support services, student incentives, increased community participation, and improved student performance.

GOALS

- Develop an early warning system to identify and monitor at-risk students, K-12.
- Expand existing network of direct human and support services for students.
- Continue student incentive programs and student incentive plans.
- Increase commitment to the dropout prevention program.
- Develop the awareness of teachers and agencies of targeted at-risk students.
- Mobilize a community-based support system to include agencies, businesses, industries, and volunteers.
- Develop a comprehensive plan of student involvement in dropout prevention.
- Increase ties between home and school.
- Develop a more effective communication network with families and the community.
- Increase parents' awareness of available resources.
- Design staff development for teachers and other school personnel.
- Develop a comprehensive program of resources and incentives for teachers and staff.

MAJOR PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Home visitor - Duties include visiting homes on behalf of high-risk students, writing descriptions of home information for school personnel, serving as a communication link between school and home, and establishing relationships between school and home.

Alternate teachers - Duties include visiting homes on behalf of high-risk students; organizing classes for block instruction with emphasis on individualized instruction, student assistance, and monitoring of in-school suspension students; tutoring and providing remediation for high-risk students; coordinating the development and implementation of the student incentive plan; and maintaining direct contact with the dropout prevention coordinator.

Data clerk/secretary - Duties include management of data, its processing, storing, and retrieval relative to the dropout early identification and monitoring system; tabulation of information gathered; project record-keeping; filing; bookkeeping; duplication of project materials; and management of the data base.

Data collection system - Each high-risk student in Haywood County has on file at the central office an Identification Referral/Data Collection Form. The information on this form contains basic information, a checklist of high-risk characteristics, recommended responses, and suggested incentives. The information gathered on the form is processed and stored for easy retrieval to aid the home visitor and dropout prevention coordinator. Computer printouts are sent to all schools at regular intervals for updates.

Dropout prevention coordinator - Duties include program planning, implementation, and evaluation related to all major and incidental dropout prevention program activities.

Contracted support services - Contracted support services have been employed to provide assistance in areas requiring special expertise. These include consultant services in the details of program design, formal project evaluation, and inservice/staff development. Additional psychological and psychiatric services have been provided on a contract basis, as has been the design of the micro-computer programs capable of handling the identification of and monitoring the data base on high-risk students.

Dropout prevention as an integral part of school - Special projects, workshops, and courses on preparation for adulthood, coping skills, decision-making, building self-esteem, and budget preparation are held in all schools.

Dropout prevention task force - This group was formed in 1985 at the beginning of the model program development. It has served as an advisory board as well as allowing opportunity for individual members to work as volunteers in implementing various aspects of the program. The task force has been instrumental in generating many of the ideas which have now become major activities for the program.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Broad-based, on-going public awareness campaign
- Hitmen/Hitwomen program where adults are paired with identified at-risk students to serve as mentors
- Development of a validated Dropout Risk Scale
- Development of a computer program designed to gather, process, store, and retrieve information related to at-risk students
- Establishment of a comprehensive network of direct human and support services including
    - Support team in each school
    - Peer counseling
    - Home visits
    - Student-teacher matches
    - Psychological services
    - Home reports
    - Parent training
    - Staff development
- Student incentive plan for each identified at-risk student
- Scholarships in recognition of students previously identified as at-risk
- Annual teacher appreciation award for outstanding contribution to dropout prevention
- Financial support from local business and industry
- Lap Reading Project which uses volunteers from the Extension Homemakers to provide enrichment to identified at-risk children in grades K-3

- Project Pursuit which provides a series of three-day backpacking, climbing, and oceanography expeditions to identified at-risk youth in grades 6-9
- Extended School Day implemented for county high school students who have not been successful in the regular program.

DATA REVIEW

DROPOUT PERCENTAGES BY SCHOOLS*

School	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Bethel Junior	1.0	0.0	0.0
Canton Junior	4.7	4.7	3.0
Pisgah Senior	6.5	5.3	6.0
Tuscola Senior	10.1	7.9	6.0
Waynesville Junior	4.6	7.3	1.0

* Grades 7-12

PERCENTAGE BY SCHOOL OF COUNTY TOTAL*

School	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Bethel Junior	1.0	0.0	0.0
Canton Junior	3.0	5.0	6.0
Pisgah Senior	28.0	26.0	35.0
Tuscola Senior	58.0	52.0	50.0
Waynesville Junior	10.0	17.0	9.0

* Grades 7-12

TOTAL NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY YEAR*

Year	Number
1985-86	186
1986-87	157
1987-88	143
Total	486

* Grades 7-12

TOTAL NUMBER OF DROPOUTS BY RACE, 1985-88*

Race	Number
White	478
Black	2
American Indian	2
Hispanic	4
Total	486

* Grades 7-12

REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL, 1985-88*

Reason	Number
Academic Problems	87
Discipline Problems	41
Dislike for School	135
Employment	14
Expulsion	12
Family Problems	57
Health Problems	14
Marriage	32
Pregnancy	25
Other	13
Unknown	56
Total	486

* Grades 7-12

OTHER DATA ABOUT DROPOUTS, 1985-88*

Number of Males	270
Number of Females	216
Average Age	17
Average Grade	10
Average Days Absent	17
Average Days Enrolled	75
Average Number of Credits	8

* Grades 7-12

WAKE COUNTY

BACKGROUND

In 1985, the Wake County Public School System was selected by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as one of three pilot sites for a dropout prevention model program. Funded initially through a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and continued through a General Assembly allocation, these model programs were designed to challenge selected school systems to develop comprehensive dropout prevention action plans with workable strategies that could be emulated by other systems.

During the past three years, the model program has afforded the Wake County Public School System a unique opportunity to focus specifically on its potential dropout population, enhancing and expanding many effective programs already in place while sponsoring new initiatives to close the gaps in services for students at risk. Adhering to the essential elements in the program design -- a central office coordinator for dropout prevention, the involvement of key educators, and an interagency school and community advisory council -- a broad-based action plan was developed. The plan includes the following areas of emphasis:

- Research and dropout data collection.
- Media and public awareness of the dropout problem.
- Linkages with community resources.
- A school-based Advancement Program for students at risk.

GOALS

Guided by the philosophy that school is for everyone and that every student should have opportunities for success, the primary mission has been to enable young people to realize their potential and to empower them to lead independent, productive lives. Consequently, the advisory council for the Dropout Prevention Model Program adopted a mission statement.

The Dropout Prevention Program will research the multiple causes of the dropout problem in the Wake County Public School System in an effort to identify the high-risk student population, to promote an awareness of the dropout problem within the school and community, and to mobilize community and school resources in implementing programs for the purpose of reducing the number of students who leave school prior to graduation.

MAJOR PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Advisory council - The Advisory Council for Dropout Prevention has served as an effective vehicle for initiating school and community partnerships through engaging leaders from all sectors of the community to work together. Members of the advisory council represent a cross section of business and industry, legal and law enforcement, health organizations, youth-serving agencies, parents, and educators.

Council members share their speaking and writing skills, tap community resources, advocate for students at risk, and join together to spearhead coalitions for youth among Wake County's youth-serving agencies and the entire community. These members work within three major committees that reflect the council's mission: research, media and public awareness, and community resources.

Community partnerships - The Wake County Interagency Council for Youth is an excellent example of a school and community partnership. Launched in 1986, the ICY has been endorsed by the Wake County Public School System, the Wake County Manager, the Raleigh Director of the Division of Human Resources, and the United Way of Wake County. The Interagency Council for Youth consists of representatives from over forty youth-serving agencies and is directed by an executive committee and coordinated by a part-time staff person.

Major goals outlined by the interagency council include

- Communicating the needs and concerns of youth to city and county planning groups;
- Promoting the purposes and services of member agencies and organizations;
- Coordinating and improving the services to youth and their families through cooperative assessment, planning, and implementation; and
- Collaborating on projects and events that benefit youth.

The ICY is responsible for a number of school and community collaborative projects, including

- The development of a comprehensive manual, listing over one hundred youth-serving agencies in Wake County, that serves as a referral guide for individuals assisting youth in the school and community;
- The development and distribution of over 70,000 Teen Helpcards offering free or low-cost services to teenagers; and
- The sponsorship of educational and staff development programs for parents and youth-serving professionals.

Media and public awareness - Strategies designed by the Media and Public Awareness Committee feature

- A slide and sound production -- "Dropping Out: Who Cares?" -- that examines the dropout dilemma in Wake County;
- ADVANCE (a dropout prevention newsletter), cable television, public presentations, and newspaper coverage; and
- A comprehensive brochure detailing the Model Program for Dropout Prevention in Wake County.

Research and data collection - Projects and strategies of the Research Committee focus on the following:

- A comprehensive database on all students who drop out of school,
- A focused interview research study to examine what students say about being at risk, and
- Three pilot projects on students at risk in collaboration with area universities.

Advancement Program: School-Based Initiatives for Dropout Prevention - On a direct service level, the Advancement Program has focused on a middle, junior, and high school preventive effort with 19 positions for counselors of high-risk students; 15 positions for in-school suspension coordinators; and a case manager -- allocated through the state's Basic Education Program. The Advancement Program has been recognized for the following features:

- Combined counseling and social work functions as outreach services for targeted high-risk students having attendance, academic, and behavioral problems;
- Individual and group counseling, consultation with teachers and administrators, home visitations, parent conferences, and parent education programs;
- Community referrals and school-based activities designed to assist high-risk students in transition activities, to provide exit interviews, and to aid students in program and career planning;
- Assistance with school assignments, crisis intervention, teacher advisement, and behavior management as an alternative to out-of-school suspension;
- Counseling services for at-risk, academically gifted students; and
- Case management approach in coordinating and accessing services for at-risk students and their families.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- An 18 percent decrease in the number of school dropouts occurred at the middle and junior high school level with an overall four percent systemwide decrease in the number of dropouts in grades 6-12 during the 1986-87 school year.
- Pilot studies and research projects were initiated at three middle schools to expand the knowledge of how to help the underachieving and potential dropout students.

- A special counseling program was developed for high-risk, gifted students at one high school.
- A community interagency council for youth-serving agencies was established to address the needs of Wake County youth.
- Expanded staff development programs were provided for dropout prevention personnel.
- Increased awareness and commitment within the school and community have provided new initiatives for dropout prevention programs.

DATA REVIEW

ESTIMATED ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES 1984-87

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT		ESTIMATED HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS		ESTIMATED HIGH SCHOOL RETENTION RATE (%)
YEAR	NUMBER	NUMBER	RATE(%)	
1984-85	18,384	1,109	6.0	79.6
1985-86	19,109	1,301	6.8	77.3
1986-87	19,053	1,284	6.7	74.4

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS BY GRADE

GRADE	85-86	86-87	87-88
7	1.2	1.0	1.4
8	5.3	4.4	3.6
9	30.1	31.5	29.4
10	27.3	26.9	27.0
11	21.2	20.7	23.3
12	14.9	15.5	12.6

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS BY SEX

SEX	85-86	86-87	87-88
Male	60.2	54.2	59.2
Female	39.8	45.8	40.8

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS BY RACE

RACE	85-86	86-87	87-88
White	57.5	59.0	61.6
Black	39.3	39.5	35.9
Other	3.2	1.5	2.5

PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS BY AGE

AGE	85-86	86-87	87-88
Under 16	7.6	8.0	9.6
16	32.8	35.0	32.6
17	30.7	29.0	33.2
18	18.9	17.0	18.3
Over 18	10.0	11.0	6.3

SUMMARY OF DROPOUT TRENDS

- There is a higher percentage of male dropouts; however, a slight increase in the percentage of females is noted from 1985-86 to 1987-88.
- Although a higher percentage of white students drop out, black students drop out in larger numbers proportionate to their representation in the school system.
- An increasing number of students are dropping out because of work-related reasons.
- Approximately two thirds of students drop out because of school related problems.
- An increasing number of students are dropping out because of multiple school, home, and employment problems.
- An increasing number of students are moving out of the home prior to their dropping out of school.
- The number of students dropping out because of health, pregnancy, and/or child care needs is increasing.
- An increasing number of students are dropping in and out of school several times during the school year.

AT A GLANCE:

DROPOUT PREVENTION ACTIVITIES IN THE MODEL PROGRAMS